

home LONDON

CREATIVE HUB

THE LONDON HOME OF SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHITECT
JENNIFER BENINGFIELD AND HER EDITOR HUSBAND,
DAVID JENKINS, ILLUSTRATES A SHREWD SENSE OF SPACE

TEXT KERRYIN DU PREEZ PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BRYANT/ARCAD

two more & full-height
sliding screen between
the kitchen and living
areas functions effectively
as both a focal point and
space divider of open
plan. The exterior of the
apartment is a late Victorian
gem in London's exclusive
Maida Vale district



VISITING AN ARCHITECT'S HOME IS ALWAYS AN INTERESTING experience. You could find yourself in a pristine architectural showpiece that liberally sings its creator's praises or just its early encounter a space teeming with potential, but neglected in favour of a client's more pressing architectural needs. The Victorian terraced home of architect Jennifer Jerrard and her husband, David Jenkins, in London's Maida Vale is of the former variety – but it's also every inch a home.

In fact, such was their manipulation of this former traditional two-bedroomed, 85 square-metre Victorian space that the four-roomed house and result seems nothing short of a miracle. "Buying existing properties means you always end up paying for other people's mistakes," says Jerrard. "We pulled out a lot of unnecessary fittings and knocked down walls in an attempt to open up and simplify the space."

This was achieved by making openings along the periphery of the space so that none of the internal walls are allowed to extend fully. The result is a seamless circular flow of space that allows unobstructed views from room to room. Moving through the apartment offers up a fluid experience as the openings in the walls provide different entry and exit points in each room. These relatively minor changes have also maximised the quality of light throughout the apartment – each room now borrows light from the windows in the room adjacent to it.

The renovation involved stripping out all of the existing surfaces and adding back only a limited number of materials such as timber, rubber flooring and white lacquer. Keen to use both colour and texture, Jennifer and David were careful to avoid any one material taking precedence over another. The incorporation of hardwood grain and

has been left of the internal dividing walls paved down to nothing more than structural supports. Jennifer and David have made the most of the space this petite apartment has to offer. Throughout, the stark white surfaces are grounded by simple elements in natural wood



back where timber governs (also the most costly part of the renovation) for the kitchen counter, a full-height sliding screen between the kitchen and living area and two long benches, served to ground the space.

"I spent about four months on the design," says Jennifer. "Women are made up of incredibly intensive sets of spaces and the biggest mistake people make is not spending enough time planning how they will be used." An alternative between them, the drawers and the tubs. This makes the kitchen appear more like a piece of furniture and less like a utility space, which is important given the open-plan nature of the living space.

All the joinery was designed and detailed by Jennifer, and was purpose-made for the flat. The tactile quality of the timber is influenced by the visibility and character of S&K detailing, homage to the pine and painted timber of the flat David lived in when he was ten. The timber panels are intended to be warm and robust, in fact the back side-panels weigh a ton," explains Jenny. "I worked with natural oil to preserve the physical presence of natural wood, the columns also have integrated timber handles that are shaped to fit the hand.

Two large windows in the kitchen make the most of available light, which spill out into the central space. The couple's collection of books and art pieces bring colour to the minimalist of the space.

As counterpoint to the richness and colour of the timber, the other surfaces are a neutral white. "Our logic was simple. If things formed part of a wall, then they were white. If they detached themselves from the wall they became black." The full-height bookshelves in the study/den-dressing room are white lacquer in the same plane as the walls. "We took all the cutlery out of the bedroom as we wanted a peaceful space with nothing but artworks on the walls."

The floor is laid with large light-grey rubber tiles and the windows are screened with light-diffusing white roller blinds. The timber benches in the living room carry collections of African and English pottery, while the white lacquer benches (made to the same design) in the hallway and bedroom carry glass from Central, West and South Africa. Small sketches and paintings are propped along the back of the benches behind the objects, while larger artworks are hung on the walls. "We're lucky in that, despite our strong opinions on both architecture and design, we have very similar tastes," says Jennifer. And that comes across clearly in the apartment. ■

CONTACT: 01474 614 014 OR 44 20 72591011 OR E MAIL: JEN@JENNIFERCHAPMANDESIGN.CO.UK



THE OWNERS

Johannesburg jeweller and her British husband, David, are real architectural buffs. Jennifer's degree in architecture from Yale University was followed by a masters from Princeton University in the US and she's currently studying for her PhD at the University College of London. David was editorial director for architecture and design at Poshin Press and is currently producing a six-volume series on the work of celebrated British architect Norman Foster. Having recently formed her own company, Operative Architects, Jennifer comes home regularly to visit family and oversee various residential projects in Johannesburg.

Her next husband and David kept their bedroom space safe and private by turning the second bedroom (visible in the background) into a study-commissioning room that takes the brunt of their combined chaos. "It's where you'll find all the messy papers and clothes," says Jenny. "But as a result the rest of the flat is always tidy!"

